



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

**Opening Remarks by Mr. Raffi Gregorian, Deputy to the Under-Secretary-General and
Director, United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism**

CT TECH Regional Awareness Raising Workshop for Europe and North Africa

Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

10 October 2023

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to Sarajevo and this regional awareness raising workshop dedicated to law enforcement responses to new technologies in countering terrorism. This workshop is held under the framework of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism's CT TECH initiative, which is made possible through a generous contribution from the European Union.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Assistant Minister Veselčić for hosting this event, to Mr. Babajide, and our partners at INTERPOL for their support to this joint initiative.

In this era of rapid technological advancements, we find ourselves confronted with the challenges and opportunities that new technologies offer. They can be powerful tools to counter terrorism, enabling governments and security services to enhance their capabilities, anticipate threats and respond swiftly and effectively.

But at the same time, terrorists have also moved to use new technologies, making the threat harder to mitigate. Responding effectively in this new era has become more complex, especially since inconsiderate use of some new technologies can trample on the human rights of the very people we are trying to protect from the terrorists.

Policymaking and legislation often play catch-up with technology. Today, we are facing dilemmas driven by jurisdictional complexities in cyberspace, the limited efficiency of traditional tools to promote law enforcement and judicial cooperation, and a lack of consensus on alternatives. As a former government official myself, I know all too well that government bureaucracies often move slower than we would like them to.

Despite our efforts, terrorist actors, unconstrained by morality or law, continue to use technology to sow fear and disrupt entire communities.

We have seen how terrorist organizations create their own applications hosting their content that circumvents the moderation systems the “everyday” platforms have. They continue to disseminate propaganda and educate their followers on operational security and much more. Merely acknowledging this is not enough. We must have responses that counter these threats effectively.

During one of our events, we heard one country’s law enforcement agency was able to prevent a potentially deadly explosion in a school, thanks to the very quick reaction and cooperation between law enforcement and the ICT company that hosted the information.

To be effective, governments and security agencies around the world have learned that they need to ground their responses in international human rights law, or they risk increasing the number of young men and women who seek to join terrorist affiliated groups. They have also begun to recognize something the terrorists mastered long ago, and that is how to manipulate gender issues to gain recruits and spread their hateful ideologies. That is why understanding how gender impacts action and response and how to integrate a gendered response are also increasingly relevant to governments and their security services.

The General Assembly, in its eighth review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in June 2023, requested UNOCT to support innovative measures and approaches to build the capacity of Member States for the challenges and opportunities that new technologies provide in preventing and countering terrorism.

Last year, we kicked off the CT TECH initiative to strengthen Member States’ law enforcement capacities to counter the exploitation of new and emerging technologies for terrorist purposes and support the leveraging of these technologies in the fight against terrorism.

Four months ago, during the Third United Nations Counter-Terrorism Week, we launched seven new knowledge products to support the development of policy and operational responses. These knowledge products explore opportunities offered by new technologies, with a strong focus on upholding human rights, the rule of law, and incorporating gender aspects.

Now it is time to promote these good practices through regional workshops such as the one we are having today for Europe and North Africa. During our previous workshops in Nairobi and Tashkent, we have witnessed how eager Member States are to share their own good practices to ensure security at home and in their region. More importantly, they have been very interested in how their regional partners deal with various aspects of countering terrorism. We truly hope that this will continue today and tomorrow.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We hope that these knowledge products and the workshop will help Member States determine whether you need to reassess your strategies and adapt your approaches to counter the use of new technologies for terrorist purposes going forward.

I look forward to the presentations and our discussions.

I thank you.